

REMARKS

Applicant objects to the Notice of Non-Compliance. There is no requirement that an Applicant provide an updated listing of claims in response to a species restriction requirement where the Applicant has not amended the claims. Furthermore, Applicant has elected *with traverse*, therefore it is improper to require the Applicant to mark certain claims as "withdrawn," when the Applicant has not withdrawn these claims from consideration. Applicant maintains that the restriction requirement is improper and that these claims should be examined on the merits. The Notice further states that it is the reply filed "11/06/06" that is not fully responsive. Applicant does not understand how the reply filed 11/06/06 could be non-responsive for not listing claims as "withdrawn" given that the restriction requirement was not sent until 2/8/2007. Regardless, in an attempt to further prosecution, Applicant has provided a new listing of the claims with claims 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 17, 32, 34, and 46 listed as "withdrawn" as directed.

Responsive to the action mailed June 28, 2007, applicant elects Species A6, B1, C1, D1. This election encompasses claims 1, 3, 7-11, 14-16, 18-25, 27-31, 33, 35-40, and 51. The election is made *with traverse*. The species requirement is improper for numerous reasons, some of which are given below.

This species requirement is improper because it is not timely. Applicant notes that the Examiner has already issued two substantive non-final office actions, indicating that the Examiner has already conducted a search on the merits of the claims. The MPEP states that:

Election of species may be required *prior to a search on the merits* (A) in applications containing claims to a plurality of species with no generic claims, and (B) in applications containing both species claims and generic or Marcush claims.

MPEP 808.01(a) (emphasis added). The MPEP also states that "the examiner should make a proper requirement as early as possible in the prosecution, in the first action if possible, otherwise, as soon as need for a proper requirement *develops*." MPEP 811 (emphasis added). Although 37 CFR 1.142(a) allows for proper restrictions at any stage of prosecution up to final action, the MPEP requires that "[b]efore making a restriction requirement after the first action on the merits, the examiner will consider whether there will be a serious burden if the restriction is

not required." MPEP 811. Given that the Applicant has not significantly amended the claims, it is clear that there would not be a serious burden on the Examiner because the Examiner has already conducted the search on the merits. Moreover, Applicant has not amended the claims in such a way that would raise a new election requirement issue. In the last reply (filed November 6, 2006), Applicant merely added one dependent claim. Therefore, the species requirement is improper and should be withdrawn.

The species requirement also fails to comply with MPEP 809.02(a). The species requirement does not clearly identify each of the "disclosed species, *to which claims are >to be< restricted.*" MPEP 809.02(a) (emphasis in original). The Examiner does not list figures, examples, or even group claims. Rather the Examiner has made a multi-modal restriction requirement with multiple lists of possible elements. There is no support within the MPEP for this type of species requirement.

For a species requirement to be proper, each species must be mutually exclusive. The various lists of possible elements by the Examiner fail to list mutually exclusive features. For example, the fiber configuration can both have a "continuous length along the entire length of the device," and be "helically wound about the device." See Office Action mailed 2/8/2007, page 3, D1 and D2. A polymer-fiber combination could be both layered on a structure, include a polymer matrix and fiber reinforcement, and have polymer and fiber on a tubular structure. See Office Action mailed 6/28/2007, page 3, C1, C2, and C4. Furthermore, a non-ceramic fiber can be made out of a plastic material. See e.g., specification, page 10, lines 5-6. Although the Examiner does include a few examples of possibly mutually exclusive features, the Examiner has not indicated how all of the elements within each list are each mutually exclusive. Moreover, as shown in the discussion above, many of the listed elements are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the Examiner is reminded that the claims include "comprising" rather than "consisting" type language; thus the restrictions are improper because the claims do not exclude the possibility of the inclusion of additional elements. Furthermore, Applicant notes that this election of a particular species does not impact the meaning or scope of any currently pending claim in any manner.

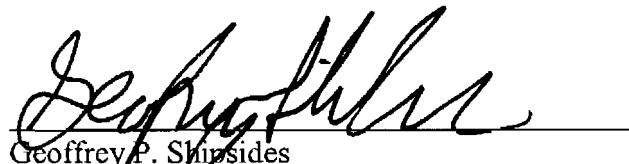
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For the above reasons, the species requirement is improper and must be withdrawn. In light of the record, Applicant respectfully requests the prompt allowance of the pending claims, as they have already been examined and there is no currently outstanding rejection of any of the claims. Furthermore, the "withdrawn" claims should with rejoined upon the allowance of the independent and generic claims.

Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,


Geoffrey P. Shipsides
Reg. No. 55,617

Date: 11/13/07
Fish & Richardson P.C.
60 South Sixth Street
Suite 3300
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Telephone: (612) 335-5070
Facsimile: (612) 288-9696

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